

ANTÓNIO FERNANDO CASCAIS

afcascais1@gmail.com

NEW UNIVERSITY OF LISBON, PORTUGAL

GENDER AND COMMUNICATION: PROBLEMATIZATIONS, METHODOLOGIES, INTERSECTIONS

ABSTRACT

Gender/ Feminist/ Women's Studies, as well as Gay, Lesbian and Queer Studies, in addition to some already well-established scientific areas in academic curricula – of which Cultural Studies and the Communication Sciences themselves are excellent examples – all have emerged from the classic domains of the Social Sciences and the Humanities. This emergence does not amount, however, to mere disciplinary specialization compelled by the real specificity of its objects that have gradually grown more differentiated and clear-cut. The disciplinary fragmentation at stake is a thematic and methodological one, as it constructs news forms of questioning rather than well-defined objects, and emphasizes intersections rather than separatisms. It therefore acquires an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary character, in such a sense that interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity are not boiled down to mere mechanical cooperation between established disciplines; rather, they have forged critical categories that, notwithstanding, provide for a decisive – yet unacknowledged – contribution to their renovation, whilst their gatekeeping practices cannot but simplistically and wrongfully detect disciplinary transgression. Nonetheless, the new inter- and trans-disciplines relentlessly strive for the invention of persuasive contexts that aim to apply their own situated knowledges beyond their original settings, thus facing a slightly understandable resistance also arising from the Communication Sciences themselves that frequently commits them to a precarious status of disparagement, if not outright dismissal. The latter, moreover, is not always avowed, but to a large extent provides an explanation for their still fragile formal establishment at national level, despite their already solid development in respect of practitioners, publications, theses, research projects and courses. In a way, both the hardships that they face and the horizons that open up to them are not different from the ones that were already presented to Communication Sciences at their inception – and that ultimately allowed for the particular status that furthered their development, more than hampered it.

KEYWORDS

Gender; Queer; academe; LGBTQI

Until very recent times, Gender / Feminist / Women's matters, as well as Gay, Lesbian and Queer matters, have not earned the consideration and concern – I would not dare to go as far as to say: the respect – they deserve in Communication Sciences in Portugal and in the scientific and academic community of communication, a consideration and a concern that the Communication Sciences can greatly profit from. I willingly admit that such a grim picture has started to change, but a long way has still to be traveled. We should remind ourselves, however, that the field of Communication has not been at the forefront of the hosting of gender and GLQ issues at the international level, and that areas such as Psychology, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Literature and the Arts have gotten ahead. What might be called a “communicational bias” could be accounted for sustaining the attitudes towards gender and queer matters prevailing in our midst. It consists in believing that, as far as the Communication Sciences are concerned, the essential questions that are to be addressed by research and teaching are related to the representation of women and LGBTQI people in the media, to their visibility in the public sphere, as well as the role played by the media in that visibility, and to the extent that the media convey social perceptions and public representations. Already a narrow interpretation of the role of the Communication Sciences, this biased approach completely avoids self-reflexivity, since it ignores the role and responsibility of communication and the media in the very construction of public representations and in the shaping of social perceptions, as if the media and communication were mere conveyors and not creators. Authors Cláudia Álvares and Maria João Silveirinha put this problem into perspective for us. Cláudia Álvares very justly calls our attention to the simple, but very often overlooked, fact that “(m)ore interesting than affirming whether or not women are actually visible in the public sphere, is, to my mind, the fact that matters of the public sphere continue to be more prevalent than those of the private” (Álvares, 2010a, p. 38). Also, Álvares stresses that the problem may not be visibility per se, or one of a simplistic, oppositional approach of the divide visibility versus invisibility, since the significant proportion of space that is currently been allocated to women in the public sphere is counterbalanced (to say the least) by the fact that “the same proportion of space is not allocated to ‘private’ issues, as if woman must travesty herself to a patriarchal conception of power and visibility so as to be heard” (Álvares, 2010a, p. 38). In this line, Álvares couldn't be more enlightening when she concludes that:

Indeed, the internalization by newspapers of the feminist dictum ‘the personal is political’ would be equivalent to a

Freudian ‘return of the repressed’ (...) whereby texts would perhaps cease to be symptomatic of a need to express the forbidden idea that both men *and* women share a private sphere, the relevance of which has been systematically downplayed due to its habitual connotation with the feminine. (Álvares, 2010a, p. 38)

The same applies to LGBTQI issues, it must here be added, for they are systematically seen as being all about “sex” and “sexuality”, which is invariably attributed to the private sphere, while, by the same token, their public representation is somehow turned to be “obscene”, to the extent that it always entails what is perceived to be a revelation of intimacy. The question of visibility would then rather be a question of *what kind* of visibility, and we are well aware that the struggles around visibility actually stand for highly politically charged struggles for meaning. In this line, one could – must – also note that the Communication Sciences can only be enriched by their ability to study the construction of gender and queer visibility in whatever discursive and non-discursive cultural product where it occurs, instead of just the media, namely when (really: often) such cultural products play an undeniable role of mediation in social relations (Álvares, 2007, p. 287).

In turn, Maria João Silveirinha (2001) reminds us, in the most insightful of terms, that the media play a crucial role in the symbolic struggle for the meaning and for the interpretations in which the social movements find themselves ever more involved, thus, should I add, becoming impossible for them to avoid giving its due importance to a clever politics of language in their resistance strategies. In fact, according to Silveirinha (2001), the studies on the relations between social movements and the media tended to approach the media as intrinsically manipulative instruments and consequently dismissed a privileged space of the social construction process, except for an eminently instrumental perspective. Silveirinha (2012, p. 98) adds that, in such a line of thought, the media studies, as well as the public policies for that matter, have focused on the broadcasting of stereotypes about women and gender (the same goes for media studies on the stereotyping of LGBTQI persons), on the assumption that public attitudes change as soon as cognitive deficits concerning inequalities and sexist representations are corrected (the same applied to the stereotyping and discriminating of LGBTQ persons). In this respect, one can only agree with Silveirinha, who states that the issues concerning the communicative inequality and imbalance between women and men is far greater than the problem of women’s invisibility (or, could one add, the problem of LGBTQI persons

invisibility, for that matter) as subjects of action (Silveirinha, 2012, p. 99). The same goes for LGBTQIs, who have always been the object of extremely visible stereotyping and biased representation, rather than subjects of action. In fact, the recurrent and insistent focus on women's misrepresentation and invisibility in the public sphere, as well as the misrepresentation and invisibility of LGBTQI persons, is as misdirected as it is misleading:

Communication, in fact, is much more than the production of images: it is the exchanging of messages that concern our lifeworld and that coordinate our experiencing it in an inclusive horizon that gathers us as rational and autonomous human persons. To think communication is, therefore, to think the possibilities we have of sharing our needs and our vindications in a space that, since it is largely filled by the media, ought to bind them to be open to our concerns as women and men. However, and precisely because that implies, at least in part, a connection to the mediatic space, the visions that it gives back are always shaped by logics of their own that put into question the very notions of private and of public that ground, for instance, the notion of public space. (Silveirinha, 2012, p. 99)

Feminist studies, as well as, should I add, queer studies, of the media and the public sphere, should stress the interdependence between the media and social movements, against a background of growingly complex mediation processes. A feminist standpoint, and the queering, of media and communication studies, should therefore retrieve an "analysis of media in the terms of its communicational structures as elements of the public sphere, instead of mere technological and economic tools for the production, broadcasting and consumption of information" (Silveirinha, 2001). In this sense, a fundamental fact about the role of the media should be acknowledged: their ambivalence. Silveirinha emphasizes, once more, that the media convey deeply rooted stereotypes and prejudices (when they're not responsible themselves for the shaping of them) that create an hegemonic sense of the traditional visions of identities, thus contributing to the social construction of a definition of the "reality" of identity relations that tend to prevail over other, alternative visions. At the same time, the media are a fundamental tool of modern life's reflexivity to the extent that they are an expression of the communalities that reflect in multiple public spheres with their correspondent actors and forms of political action, turning it into something more than a mere metaphor for theatricality (Silveirinha, 2002, pp. 13-14). The Janus-faced character of the media in modern democracy

consists in the fact that, on the one hand, the media can be accounted for the massifying and homogenizing effect of an integration process that provides no room to differentiated action e allows no visibility to differentiated identities; all the while, and on the other hand – and in this Silveirinha builds on the feminist revision of the Habermasian notion of public sphere (Álvares, 2010, p. 26, 38), as a plural space and an intermediate structure connecting the political system to the private sectors of the lifeworld and to its functional systems – the media can be accounted for creating subaltern publics – or “subaltern counter-publics” (Silveirinha, 2002, p.7) – by fueling the activation and the expression of a civil society that generates new communalities that produce new meanings for the larger community through the sharing of alternative lifestyles that frequently expand trans-nationally: “The mass media have always had a potential for creating and nourishing cultural communities related to already discreet social groups (...) thus reinforcing a sense of shared cultural identity” (Silveirinha, 2002, p. 9). Although I gladly acknowledge the basic post-habermasian assumption that modern communication – along with everything that it entails – stems from the constitutive lack of the originary community, and that it is overrun by the nostalgia that relentlessly nourishes its utopian drive, and although I fully subscribe to the notion of communication as an reflexive instrument that is absolutely indispensable to the collective cooperation that constitutes the ultima ratio for the very existence of the human community as the warranty and medium for the survival of each one of its members, I cannot prevent myself from considering that any critical inquiry aimed at scrutinizing the exclusionary processes that its claim to universality gave rise to can leave untouched the very formulation of such a claim and overcome exclusion simply by resorting to a process of broadening progressively the scope of universality so as to accommodate ever more differentiated subjects and forms of action. A particular attention must be given to the fact that exclusion might start inside the very criteria of admission to the community of communication and be relayed by the very definition of cooperative action that it implies. This concern, one that might be regarded as extreme, radical, intricate and far-fetched, has risen from the historic evidence of rejection (on the grounds of ethnicity, sexuality, gender, culture...) and it has become all the more pressing in the course of the shift from a politics of identity to a politics of the performative in Gender and Queer theory. Bearing this in mind, I would like to subscribe to, and all along qualify, Silveirinha’s statement according to which

contemporary political action that evolves around identity cannot be understood without the movements that focus on communality (whether it is grounded in common experience, shared oppression or natural fact) for instance women, persons with a certain ethnic background, sexual orientation, etc. and who organize in response to the rejection from incorporation in the universal community that is promised by capitalist liberalism. (Silveirinha, 2004, p. 292)

The performative turn in the Social Sciences, and the subsequent shift from a politics focusing on identity to a politics focused on performativity, have taught us that there's no identity without the identification process from which it performatively results, be it self- or hetero-identification. The most important role of the media as an instrument of recognition must therefore be acknowledged, and not solely a role of misrepresentation of stigmatized, subaltern, and ultimately dehumanized, identities. Even if, and above all when, social movements take upon themselves the task of interrupting, through the imposing and impinging of their own alterity on, the all-encompassing mediatic thrust to fuse irrevocable otherness in universal sameness, for the media not only use, but they evolve in the very wider medium of language itself, which "is not a narcissic means through which we can project ourselves in others, but instead, that in the ethical relation to be established with the other, language plays the fundamental role of inquiring, questioning, allow the other to manifest on his/her own terms" (Álvares, 2010b, pp. 244-245). Accordingly, the basic, structuring question that must ground every mediatic representation, as well as guide all research on the media, is not "What are you?", but rather "What do you want?". Furthermore, and considering that identity is performatively constructed by the social movements along deconstructive, reconstructive and resubjectivating strategies of resistance (or a Butlerian "politics of the performative"), against symbolic dismissal, stereotype, injurious speech or inaugural injury (Butler, 1996), the former question should even be refined as: "What do you want *to be*?" Only on these grounds can we address the other on the base of *the difference that binds us*. From this, a vast horizon of research possibilities unfolds before our eyes.

The "communicational bias" does not suffice, however, to explain the reticence or the resistance offered by the Communication Sciences to Gender and Queer Studies. It's not difficult (at all) to detect amidst our domain a line of reasoning that elaborates on a succession of claims that have already been heard coming from other scientific domains and according to

which gender and queer matters: a) lack specificity in themselves that; b) might substantiate a clear-cut differentiation from well established fields of knowledge from which they ultimately borrow objects, methods, lines of inquiry...; c) thus reasserting their status of intrinsic dependence towards the former and d) the intrinsic futility of endeavouring to set them apart from the established fields of knowledge because they are unable of providing for any relevant innovation or qualitative improvement beyond what is already known and that has been acquired through the proper widely accepted and proven ways; e) therefore Gender and Queer Studies have more to gain from their inclusion rather than from their extrication from established fields that do better, and always have done better, whatever they would never do on their own to the advancement of knowledge.

Such an epistemological self-absorbed closureness of the Communication Sciences has a direct and immediate bearing on the resistance to the integration Gender and Queer Studies in the area's academic curriculum. Notably, seems to be most alien and unintelligible from where the Communications Science stand are the extremely productive results and effects of the de-naturalizing and de-essentializing critical and reflexive programme of Queer Theory – the “queering” – brought about by the so-called “performative turn” that comprised a true politics of knowledge and allowed for the synthesis of feminist and gay and lesbian inquiry and the subsequent revision and rethinking of the groundings of the former identity politics. This ultimately opened up a space of self-reflexivity that allowed, in turn, that both gender and queer inquiry engaged in the rethinking of social and political movements in the horizon of their possible intersections, thus contributing for the emergence of interseccionalidade as both a major theoretical and political concern, in that it proves to be a fundamental tool to address the issue of the multiplicity and diversity of the intertwining patterns of subordination/privilege relations (Nogueira, 2011, p. 69):

Interseccionalidade manages to explain the complexity of all identities. (...) A critical and interseccional approach implies a high degree of complexity in what regards research. (...) And if different positionings can be found to face such complexity, why not join them together and put them to use in order to produce a knowledge that is always open to self-questioning, always critical, always aware of the possibilities of reification, even if they are simply temporary or provisional categories or assumptions and only used strategically?

This having been said, Nogueira and Oliveira call our attention to the fact that, in spite of its biased interpretations, in no way intersectionality is to be reduced to ready-made superpositions of identities and their subordinations or mechanical crossings with their correspondent easy and immediate political coalitions and homologies (Nogueira, 2011, p. 72; Oliveira, 2011, p. 51). I would say that such is the state-of-the-art with which Gender and Queer Studies make themselves available to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work inside the national Communication Sciences whose estrangement from these epistemological debates is responsible for their adamant attitude towards what they cannot but regard as having nothing to be retained from or learned with.

As the matter of fact, gender and queer are not simple descriptors, but critical categories, categories that have developed a critical theoretical apparatus that does not simply translates into more fashionable terms whatever has already been canonically conceptualized in the Communication Sciences, or any other field in the Social and Human Sciences for that matter:

The study of gender (...) is no residual scientific category, but instead a specific mode of scrutinizing and analyzing all areas of social reality. (...) From the epistemological standpoint, Gender Studies are fundamental, for they counterbalance the ages-long tendency in which the production of knowledge had the masculine principle as its norm. (Schouten, 2011, p. 9)

But this is probably the most difficult claim to sustain before a distrusting academic audience that is not at all convinced that the critical apparatus developed inside Gender and Queer Studies can also be put to use in, and make extremely relevant contributions to, other fields in the Social and Human Sciences. It is no minor or easy task to: “shed light on the dynamics and complexity of the concept of gender and demonstrate that it is not a ‘done for’ or ‘consensual’ term, simple to define and easy to put to operation” (Pereira, 2012, p. 30). In actual fact, state of the art Gender and Queer Studies – at international level – are the outcome of a true epistemological revolution that is yet to be acknowledged by national Communication Sciences. The resistance of the latter to such a revolution comes out of the fact that it happened in the outside of their realm, a realm that already is under considerable suspicion from the outset. In other, more concrete and simple words, the Communication Sciences tend to maintain an essentialist, totalizing, falsely universalistic approach of gender and queer matters

that has long been questioned and revised in the domain of Gender and Queer Studies themselves.

In this respect, I wish to emphasize that what is at issue here is a “defense and illustration” of Gender or Queer Studies, which has already been done – elsewhere, much better and by much more qualified people than myself – but, instead, to argue for the opening up of Communication Sciences, at both epistemological and institutional level, to the subjects, to the concepts and critical methodologies and to the problemizations proper to gender and queer matters. Such an opening would be instrumental in countering the true epistemological absence – in a sense equivalent, in the Communication Sciences, to what has been called, in Sociology, the need for a “Sociology of absences” – (Santos, 2000, p. 229) that does not simply amount to a fortuitous omission, but constitutes a self-defeating bias, a deliberate cognitive twist that seriously jeopardizes the process of the production of knowledge in the Communication Sciences. I should also stress that I am not pleading for a formal recognition of Gender and Queer Studies apart from the Communication Sciences or any other domain, as a necessary precondition of their evolving, but rather for a recognition of their specificity inside the Communication Sciences in order to prevent the overall effect of closeting Gender and Queer Studies in the “you know what” academic and scientific ghetto of irrelevance and desultoriness.

Gender and Queer Studies have sometimes been charged with the responsibility for their own ghettoization. In this regard, John D’Emilio’s claim, made more than twenty years ago, stills holds true for the present national context: “Another important strategic issue involves the choice between mainstreaming and ghettoization” (D’Emilio, 1992, p. 171). And it continues to be as true now as it was back then, and as unachieved now as it was then, that mainstreaming is the ultimate end towards which all efforts must be directed. In the north-american context, D’Emilio that complete integration would be a long-term goal, a step-by-step process, achieved through the commitment of individual faculty and researchers who incorporate new knowledge and new perspectives in their teaching and research practice, but one that could only succeed through the collective concourse aimed at the recognition of the specificity of Gender and Queer Studies: “Without them, we won’t have the critical mass of intelectual workers or the ‘free’ intelectual space to do the work that will make the curriculum reform someday feasible” (D’Emilio, 1992, p. 171). The correctness of mainstreaming notwithstanding, I would like to remark that the divide (Tavares, Coelho & Góis, 2011, p. 31) between separatist, ghetto-bent programmes

(commonly associated with political engagement in social movements, either feminist or LGBTQI) and integrationist, mainstreaming programmes (commonly associated to epistemological criticism as it is practiced in academe), instead of being a clear-cut, unequivocal, sharp-edged distinction (which amounts to saying: the possible alternative), is rather intersected and crossed by other options and operating strategies. I particularly have in mind the fact that the political engagement associated to separatism is often less forceful and threatening to the academic disciplinary structuring, with all its borders, gatekeeping practices, strong hierarchical power relations, etc.), than epistemological criticism that usually seems to trigger off, in a rather more precipitous way, methodological transgression and interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary contamination and intersection. The latter are much more apparent in Gender and Queer Studies than in the clear-cut dominions of the other Social and Human Sciences, in which it's not unusual to see authors who, in spite of positioning themselves overtly and assertively in a way that is normally looked upon as "ideological", "politicized" and "engaged" (and, therefore, taken to be incompatible with the neutrality, disinterestedness, impartiality, distancing and objectivity of science), by no means infringe the power arrangements and balances that ground both each disciplinary cutting and the relations between disciplines. In other words, it seems to us that it is less dangerous to practice a Sociology, a Psychology, a History, etc. that is assertively ideological and politicized, than practicing a politics of knowledge capable of hurting the integrity of disciplinary structuring.

Another issue, still concerning the possible divide between ghettoization and mainstreaming, could deserve a note – but exactly that, just a note: the difference between Gender Studies and Queer Studies bearing directly on such divide. Although not in an open manner, it has been suggested that the coalition of Gender, Women's and Feminist Studies with Queer Studies (a tacit assumption that I've been keeping all throughout this text) is somehow detrimental to a successful integration of the former in academe and, furthermore, that an integration and dissolution of queer matters inside Gender Studies would be worth contemplating. It is important to remark at this point that no similar complaint and suggestion have ever been uttered on the part of Queer Studies, which, according to John D'Emilio,

will find itself confronting one problem to whose solution the experience of ethnic and gender studies offers no clues – the issue of visibility, of the closet, of coming out. Although there is no inherent reason why only a gay man or

lesbian would teach a gay studies course or do lesbian-related research, and no inherent reason why only gay and lesbian students would enroll in such courses, the fact is that these choices are often interpreted as a de facto declaration of identity. (D'Emilio, 1992, pp. 171-172)

At national level, it is now acquired that Gender Studies are not a domain solely for female faculty to engage in; however, an equivalent recognition concerning Queer Studies is far from being achieved, in spite of the known fact that national authors who research and publish in the field, some of whom are the most prominent in it, have never publicly vindicated any kind of identity affiliation in what regards sexual subjectivity, communitary inclusion or any kind of related biographical trait whatsoever. Should we ask ourselves how difficult is this to understand and accept? And why hasn't it yet become trivial among us? To a large extent, the situation of Queer Studies practitioners today bears quite a resemblance to the one (and often quoted) described by Teresa Joaquim back in 1987, in the study where she revealed that the majority of the Portuguese women scholars of the time wouldn't want their image to be associated to Women's Studies because of its fragile deployment in the Portuguese academe (Tavares et al., 2011, p. 35). As to the melting of queer matters in Gender Studies, it should be acknowledged, all along with the chronological seniority of the latter, that if queer matters were to be spontaneously addressed inside them, they would have been long ago, under the initiative of gender researchers themselves. And it simply didn't happen. As to why, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has made a good, definitive point about it, in Axiom 2 of her *Epistemology of the Closet*: "The study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender; correspondingly, antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist inquiry. But we can't know in advance how they will be different" (Sedgwick, 1991, p. 27). Moreover, what might be regarded as a kind of coalition, be it strategic or merely circumstantial, between Gender Studies and Queer Studies actually stems, to a great extent, from the erosion of previously prevailing feminist epistemologies and gay and lesbian epistemologies, under the influence of queer theory and its de-essentializing and de-naturalizing programme that completely revised the notion of "women", "gays" and "lesbians" as the political subjects on which Feminist and Gay and Lesbian Studies greatly depended upon until then. This might be (one of) the reason(s) why Gender Studies could be (mis)understood as a "depoliticization of the field": "It's also important to point out that not all gender studies are based in a neutral standpoint and that there even are several paramount publications in

the field that advocate for a strong tie with feminist epistemological frameworks” (Tavares et al., 2011, p. 31). Queer theory criticism allowed existing feminist epistemologies to go far beyond the “exposure of androcentrism that questions the universal masculine ‘neutral’” (Tavares et al., 2011, p. 33), which, along with the struggle for women’s visibility as an object in the Social and Human Sciences, occupied most feminist criticism from the 1970s on in Portugal. Tavares, Coelho and Góis acknowledge precisely this when they say that the epistemological questioning (which is to say, a critical feminist theory) is part of a second phase in the process of the establishment of studies on women in Portugal (Tavares et al., 2011, p. 32), although “it has to be said that the epistemological debate in the Social Sciences in Portugal has had little consequence as yet” (Tavares et al., 2011, p. 34).

It has also been emphasized that the tardiness of the emergence of Gender Studies, and Queer Studies even more so, is due to the weakness of social movements in Portugal, to the profound financial frailties that were prevalent all the way down to the nineteen-nineties in the universities and that have prevented the channeling of budgets to financing new fields of knowledge, and ultimately to the late institutionalization of Social and Human Sciences in the country. This is far from untrue. Nevertheless, more remains to be said about it. To a large extent, Gender and Queer Studies have followed the road traveled before them by such areas as Cultural Studies and the Communication Sciences themselves, in the sense that they have faced the same kinds of challenges, just in different periods of time. Somehow, the incipient and heroic status of contemporary Gender and Queer Studies, that still have to fight for their threatened existence in our country, re-enacts the particular status of the Communication Sciences (or Cultural Studies, for that matter) that once evolved from the whole of the long established areas of Social and Human Sciences. This is why an uncomfortable feeling of estrangement derives from the fact that certain lines of criticism, and sometimes even a subtle hint of antagonism, are coming from the Communication Sciences, the ones that have suffered exactly from the same misunderstandings emanating in their day from well established fields of the Social and Human Sciences. More openness was to be expected from former targets of academic incomprehension. A closer look on the emergence of Gender and Queer Studies might shed light on the fact that they have not stemmed from mere disciplinary specialization, compelled by the real specificity of its objects that gradually have gotten more and more differentiated and clear-cut. The disciplinary fragmentation in question here is a thematic and methodological one, as it constructs problemizations and

intersections rather than objects, therefore acquiring an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary character. In all actuality, emergent domains (Cultural Studies, Post-colonial Studies, Feminist, Women's and Gender studies, GLQ Studies) are incompatible with disciplinary self-absorption. In fact, they're born out of "methodological transgression" (Santos, 1999, pp. 48-49), not at all unlike Cultural Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, etc. and, in quite some respects, for sure, the Communication Sciences themselves. Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity cannot be reduced to mere mechanical cooperation between established disciplines, but rather have forged critical categories that, all the while, provide for a decisive, although unacknowledged, contribution to their renovation, whilst their gatekeeping practices cannot but wrongfully detect disciplinary inconsistency in such a process. Nonetheless, the new inter- and transdisciplines relentlessly strive in the "invention of persuasive contexts conducive to the application of methods outside their natural habitats" (Santos, 1999, p. 49) beyond their original settings, thus confronting a little understandable resistance that frequently commits them to a precarious status of disparagement, if not outright dismissal. Moreover, although it is not always avowed, this explains to a large extent their still fragile formal establishment at national level, in spite of their already solid development in what regards practitioners, publications, theses, research projects and courses. In a certain way, both the hardships that they face and the horizons that open up to them are no different from the ones that were already present to Communication Sciences in their inception and that ultimately allowed for the particular status that furthered their development, rather more than hindered it. Gender and Queer Studies are the new "indisciplines", very much in the same sense that the Communication Sciences started to be long before them. It so happens that what cannot but be perceived by the public eye as the opacity of power relations inside academic institutions is nourished, and all the more so in our country, by the stark corporatism as well as by the by no means splendid isolation of the academic milieu, the majority of which (with few exceptions) keeps regarding with utter suspicion and discomfort any opening to the larger social community that might entail any involvement with issues that are perceived as fracturing. If many of the issues and subjects of study in the gender and queer area are ranked, whether rightfully or wrongly, in that category, the ones that immediately raise political questions are totally and automatically regarded as wholly, unmistakably political. This means that the simple fact of approaching them from a theoretical standpoint allows for the contamination of the prerequisites of scientific rigorousness by undesirable political

considerations, and this ultimately gets to be perceived as a gesture that jeopardizes academic neutrality, objectivity and independence.

One can recognize here the roots of the contemporary programs of resubjectivation developed by queer theory and that inspire lesbian feminist, gay and transgender movements that are committed to a politics of the performative that has completely reformulated the terms of the question of the subject of feminism and LGBT struggle. It has been noticed, and I wish to acknowledge it here, that, in a very characteristic and significant way, the difficulties in welcoming and assimilating Gender and Queer Studies, profoundly shaped by post-structuralist critical trends, by the national Communication Sciences in particular, as well as in the broader domain of the Social and Human Sciences in general, can be said to be in direct relation to the low degree of their exposure to the pragmatic turn, to the superficial reception of the contributions of such thinkers as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, or Gilles Deleuze, and to the ensuing discussions most deeply influenced or shaped by Derridean deconstructionism, Foucauldian power/knowledge inquiries and Deleuzian post-psychoanalytic programs, and to the lack of awareness concerning the subsequent essentialism versus constructivism debate. Not surprisingly, it is not uncommon, at national level, to meet scholarly audiences that seem to be hearing some things for the very first time, since they tend to translate them to grids of intelligibility they're more familiar with, which in turn has the discouraging effect of giving them the impression that there really isn't anything new in what has just been conveyed to them and which is frequently expressed in the opinion that what they are witnessing is just a matter of foreign academic fashion. This is quite easy to notice in the Q&A aftermath of conferences. State-of-the-art discussions and arguments between well-informed, knowledgeable opponents very seldom arise and most of the times audiences' reactions reveal that people simply miss the point because that are not really aware of what is being talked about. Widespread intellectual deafness makes true ravages in the Portuguese academe.

Which brings us to the other meaning of fracturing in the aforementioned fracturing question(s). And that has to do with cognitive shock. It must be stated from the onset that every emergent domain does not simply add to pre-existing well established fields of teaching, of theoretical inquiry and of empirical or field research; they do not only expand them, build upon them, resume or complete whatever they started; they also need to break with whatever concepts, notions, biases, acquired and consolidated certainties that ultimately prevent them to arise, they need to challenge the

prevailing paradigms of thought that hinder their becoming intelligible. Which is to say, they derive from true Kuhnian anomalies that paradigmatic science cannot accommodate except through its own crises and its subsequent profound epistemic shifts, never as if it were just a question of adding one more item to your usual curriculum. They entail unavoidable struggles against the gatekeeping practices of established fields, and – a concept borrowed from the Sociology of Science is very much in order here – this all implies a “boundary work” (Felt, 2000, pp. 268-271), consisting on the negotiation of the ultimate meaning, relevance and authoritativeness of the scientific endeavor centered on the struggle between the forces that reject novelty and the forces that are ready to accommodate it. This is why we must counter the approach of gender and queer issues

as a question that the Social Sciences discovered at a certain time, and not as a contested subject, that only gradually, partially and hardly has asserted itself as a recognized and respected object of study and one that has been at the core of important and intense epistemic struggles at the heart of the social sciences. (Pereira, 2012, p. 28)

In actual fact, the issues that presently can be determined to pertain to the scope of Gender and Queer Studies did not arise spontaneously or sediment gradually inside of various already existing fields (Psychology, Sociology, Literary Studies...). If it were so, gender and queer issues would have been taken up inside those disciplines by the competent experts in the course of their usual business. It never happened that way and could never happen that way, very much unlike a claim commonly held against Gender and Queer Studies’ practitioners who are often blamed by their closeted opponents and detractors of unnecessarily breaking up with the established fields of knowledge inside which they would have been let free, undisturbed and untroubled, to develop their research agendas. Not so. The former were never peaceful acquisitions in the calm waters of the regular puzzle-solving Kuhnian processes that make for disciplinary routine. There never is and never can be a proper, “low profile”, inconspicuous, innocuous, acceptable or palatable way of starting to do Gender and Queer Studies. If nothing else, this can be objected to our detractors, frequently disguised of friendly advisers, that accuse us of counterproductive provocation, unapologetic self-marginalisation or candid, voluntary self-exclusion: if such path were to exist, it would have been taken long ago by the very same that argue in favor of it. This does not entail that wise concessions, or tactical retreats, are not in order, and that step by step advancements are not the best way to ensure

a steady progress towards full recognition and acceptance. They all are. Academic integration being the ultimate goal, however, it is precisely that which raises, if not aggressive resistance (seldom, actually), covert antagonism for sure (the most common), and all the more effective for that matter.

The fact that Gender and Queer Studies have constituted themselves in an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary form, rather makes patent their politically charged origins, rather than masks them. Their ultimate goals are the criticism and transformation of social, political, cultural, economic, and ethnic situations that intersect gender and sexuality. This implies that they stem from the recognition of such realities and the social agents and political subjects whose existence were made possible by such situations and that pursue such goals both outside and inside academe. This might explain why the resistance that Gender and Queer Studies are faced with is nevertheless quite stronger than the one the Communication Sciences were once confronted by. I would fully subscribe to the idea that

(o)ne of the signal achievements of the campus turmoil of the 1960s was the recognition that the universities are not ivory towers where individuals engage in the disinterested, dispassionate and detached pursuit of knowledge and truth. Rather, universities are intimately connected to the society of which they are a part. They are capable of producing change, to be sure, but they can also reflect, and reproduce, the dominant values, beliefs, habits and inequalities of their society. Everything we do – the research questions we formulate, the research process itself; where we publish our results; the courses we decide, or are told, to teach; the books and articles we assign – represents choices that individuals make. These choices reflect a particular view of the world, of our society and of how things ought to be. (D’Emilio, 1992, p. 162)

As it can be easily inferred, the Portuguese academe remains considerably impermeable to Gender and Queer Studies and it is used to producing antibodies against what Jeffrey Weeks called the “*standpoint position(s)*” (Weeks, 2000, p. 9) ground the rationale that make Gender and Queer Studies possible and which ultimately imply that anyone who commits himself or herself to them has to position himself or herself inside his or her own field or discipline in terms of a politics of knowledge. We all know this is not something you can get away with undamaged or untouched. Must we remind ourselves that we are at war when we are massively pressured to tell our students to leave the country because there’s simply no place for them

here? The price of peace, however, is something we are very well acquainted with in times of crisis: established fields quietly fade into obsolescence in the illusion that nothing relevant is going on in the areas they regard with the usual contempt and thus preventing themselves to acknowledge the very materials that are so needed to their own renovation. This is precisely what should be seen as a valuable asset and all argumentation in favor of Gender and Queer Studies should be guided by an emphasis on the loss that would ensue from ignoring or refusing their contribution to, and their relevance

for the cross-fertilization of ideas that they encourage, and for the reconceptualization of experience and knowledge that they provoke. That means that we should be working to scramble the traditional lines of division between fields of knowledge: new issues don't necessarily require new methodologies, but innovation should be seen as a valuable asset. (D'Emilio, 1992, p. 170)

One final consideration, concerning the younger generations of scholars that are doing Gender and Queer Studies at national level – and given the fact that it is mostly a young generation that engages in these areas – through whom the indispensable innovation in scientific research and higher education is to come. The fact of their not having a formal and permanent professional tie that might allow them to pursue a career in the national R&D or Higher Education systems, if, on the one hand, provides them with a considerable latitude and freehand that bears no comparison to what their installed fellow colleagues experience, on the other hand, it also curtails their possibilities of earning and profiting from institutional expression and, therefore, their capacity of effectively influencing in any way academic attitudes towards Gender and Queer Studies. As it should be obvious by now, in no way is here at stake the intrinsic scientific excellence of this young generation of researchers, who often have published and presented papers at both national and international level, who have gone through very demanding evaluation processes totally unknown to the older generations who most likely would never be able to meet the same criteria and strictures that the former became familiar with as they have submitted to scrutiny by national and above all international referee committees and a certain number of whom presently have even richer and rather more diversified resumé's than their senior fellow colleagues who have professional ties to the Portuguese Higher Education system. Finally, the concourse of the endogamic fencing in of national universities and the policies of financial control and budgetary restriction imposed upon them

and the national R&D system under the pretext of overcoming the present economic crisis cuts short any expectations of professional integration for the younger generation of researchers in the very system that trained them, and, consequently, any prospect of renewal, so much needed for the very reproduction of the educational and R&D systems themselves. The quantitative and qualitative gaps that set apart national universities and research centers from their international partners cannot but grow wider under the circumstances. Fragile areas such as Gender Studies, and Queer Studies all the more so, seem to be hovering over the void. Instead of promises of change, they stand as the weakest links to be disposed of. A growing feeling that a dead end of overall unwantedness and unpreparedness for what lies ahead cannot be averted. Hopefully, the future will prove me wrong.

The future, yes. Maybe one can never be ready for the future. Besides, we're never there yet. But at least we should be prepared to meet the demands of our present.

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